

Copy

Boston July 11. 1838.



Mr. Ward

Dear Sir

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Yours of the 22^d^{ult.} was duly received, & as there was nothing in it that seemed to require an immediate reply, I laid it aside for the first leisure moment I could command. Now however I can only glance briefly at the several topics you suggest.

In most of your views I heartily concur. For myself I have never "puffed" Garrison in any form, nor have I approved it in others. I have sometimes defended him from what I considered unjust attacks - but I have done nothing more. This I have done, not on the ground of "expediency", but of justice. [Whatever may be true of the influence he is now exerting, & in many respects I think it bad in the extreme, no man can deny that in time past he has done much, very much, for the cause of the slave. For this let us give him all the credit he deserves, & there let us stop. I have no idea that the success of our cause depends on him alone, or that for the sake of its success, we ought to refrain from condemning, in all proper ways, his peculiarities, & resisting them to the utmost. This I have done, both in private & public, as occasion has seemed to require, & I shall continue to do it, in time to come.] Still, in this, as well as in promoting abolition itself, I think the truth is to be spoken in love, & of all things, so spoken as not to allow the cry of persecution to be raised. Nor am I alone in this. The number of dissentients from all that is peculiarly Garrisonian is daily

increasing. The charm is now broken, & it has come to be well understood that a man may condemn him, in all that is peculiar with him, & yet be an abolitionist; & I flatter myself that I have been somewhat, if not principally instrumental in bringing about this result. Do you ask me how? Not by retiring from ~~the society~~ cooperation with him in the Society & then finding fault but by staying in the Society & taking my exceptions there. The policy I some months since marked out for myself was this — to stand in the ranks, hold up my head as a good abolitionist, with as much confidence as Garrison himself, verify the reality of my abolition by double diligence in the promotion of the Cause, thus ~~to put it out~~ putting it out of the power of anyone to impeach my character as an abolitionist, & then, as occasion might ~~offer~~ offer, enter my dissent from anything I might deem exceptionable; & if any, on that ground, should question my abolitionism, to insist that dissent from me was as much evidence against their abolitionism, as dissent from them or him was against mine. By pursuing this course, the ice is broken, & not a few abolitionists, whenever occasion requires it, are ready to call in question & oppose Mr. G's peculiarities, just as they would those of any other man. And this policy I am persuaded is the only right or ~~effectual~~ effectual one. It will in the end either hold Garrison back, or if he & his friends will push on & link their shibboleths to the present anti-slavery Society, it will enable us to stand on high ground before the public & to withdraw & act by ourselves, with no possible ground for the impeachment of our character as abolitionists. I trust we shall be saved the necessity of a

division. The Lord grant it. Still I do not think division, death, by any means. Only let us not take the responsibility of it. Let it be seen, if it must come, that the responsibility of it is theirs, not ours, & that we are driven to it, by their union of foreign & mischievous doctrines & subjects with that of abolition.

If you will read carefully, you will see that a majority were not in favor of the doctrine that Congress can abolish slavery in the states, in time of peace, & in the manner claimed by Mr. Stewart. A majority were against his doctrine, but they voted for the proposed amendment in the constitution of the Anti-Slavery Society, because they thought the society as such, incompetent to decide on questions of Constitutional law, & should not therefore express any opinion, one way or the other, on the subject. This it now does. It stands committed, by its constitution, to the doctrine that Congress cannot in any case abolish slavery in the states. It admits to the states "exclusive legislation" in all cases, & that, when it is notorious that in one case, the case of war, Congress can abolish in the states, or do anything else "for the general welfare." The vote then to which you refer was on the general question of amendment to the Constitution, so as to leave the society, uncommitted, either way, on the subject, & not on the question whether Congress can, in time of peace, abolish slavery in the several states.

You think the leaven of Garrison's sentiments is diffusing itself & mention as evidence, that in one Church there has been a discussion on the sanctity of the Sabbath. I have no doubt that to some extent the leaven is spreading, & I have still less doubt that discussion will cure it. The truth is you can't smother such things. If you do, the fire only burns the deeper & surer. It is like a coal pit. Keep the fire under & the whole mass will be charred. Give it vent, & out it goes. I am not

for provoking a premature discussion, of the Sabbath, wo-
-man, perfection, & ministerial questions, but when the time
comes we must gird ourselves to the combat; & for one
I have no fear of the result. Meanwhile it becomes us to in-
-vestigate these subjects anew, that we may meet them in
their new form. I say new form, for after all, they are
only Shakerism, "newramped up".

I shall be happy to hear from you at any time, & will
give you such answers as my ability & time will allow.
This letter you will understand to be confidential. It is for
your eye alone. You can make such use of its hints as
you please.

Yours with much respect.

Amos A. Phelps.